



May 1, 2009

2009 legislative session comes to a close

Greetings friends and neighbors,

The Legislature adjourned for what was supposed to be the final time in 2009 last Sunday night, but unfortunately the House didn't finish the bills they wanted in time. Now it looks as if the Legislature will have to come back for a special session. I'll go into more detail about that a little later.

In these weekly updates, I have been trying to share with you what I've been learning and experiencing throughout session. **I've said it before, but serving you in the state Senate has been by far the most exciting thing I've ever done!** The flip side of that coin, however, is that it's also one of the most frustrating things I've ever done. It has been such a challenge dealing with so many different people with different ideas on how to solve our state's problems.

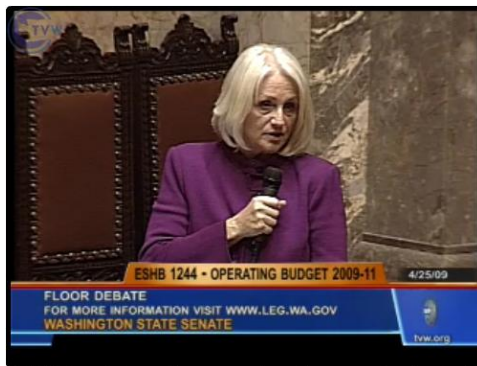
Throughout the 2009 session, I spent a lot of time in committees listening to public testimony on bills. Some of the bills would have done a lot of good for the people of this state and they didn't pass, and some of the bills were really poorly conceived yet they were approved. Some of the bills were even intended to make legal some things that were already happening illegally. For example in the health care field, some people have been dispensing medications, albeit over-the-counter medications outside the parameters of their scope of



practice. In the veterinarian field, some areas of practice were being done by clinic staff without having a veterinarian present. **It was almost as if the interested parties were asking the state for forgiveness rather than permission.** I think that's a backward way to operate and it's not the right way to do business.

As far as voting on bills with the full Senate, it was by far my favorite part of session. I loved listening to floor speeches, hearing other people ask the same questions I had about a bill proposal and making up my mind one way or the other. Senators can only really learn the intricate details of bills that come before their committees, and there are a lot of bills that go to a lot of different committees. I had to learn about some bills by asking questions, talking with other legislators and reading the bill books that we're given to us each day. As I stated above, this has truly been the most exciting, and at the same time the most frustrating experience that I've ever had.

Budget negotiations not quite what I'd hoped



Click to watch my floor speech on the operating budget!

When I first came to the Senate, I imagined writing a budget to get Washington out of the \$9 billion deficit it's facing would take all of us working together on behalf of all of the citizens of our state. **I'd hoped that we'd all be trying to find ways to make the budget work for everyone, but to my dismay, I was wrong.**

Instead we heard a lot of committee testimony about what people wanted and why their program was more important than another. And in the end, only a select few members actually put the budget together. Republicans were shut out of the process completely and even a lot of Democrats didn't have a say in the final budget that was revealed just three days before the end of our 105 day session.

To me, that's a terribly inefficient way to write a budget. When I talk to people in our district, they tell me they want an open, transparent budgeting process that starts from the ground up, streamlines inefficiencies and they want budget writers to work together for the common good of all Washingtonians. **That's not what happened this session.**

The budget that passed was jammed down our throats at the last minute and that strategy backfired on the majority party in the House, as they were unable to pass all the bills needed to implement their budget before the midnight deadline. Some members in the House felt that it

was not an appropriate way to pass bills related to the budget and were able to stall the process.

Though the budget that passed is called “balanced” by its writers, it is really just smoke and mirrors. The budget relies on \$5 billion in one-time federal stimulus money and fund transfers from other state budgets and accounts. **That sets the state up for potentially an even greater budget shortfall in just two years, when we’ll have to balance the budget again, only without those one time funds. Where will budget writers turn for help then?**

Looming special session

Because the House was unable to pass several of the bills needed to implement the budget before the deadline Sunday, the governor will likely call us all back into a special session sometime later this month or next. The rumor is it will last only a few days, with a limited scope of passing the bills that didn’t get out the first time around. However, the governor can’t require the Legislature to stick to those bills, and many people are afraid that a special session will be the perfect excuse for the majority party to resurrect dead bills and rejected tax increase proposals at the last minute. **You can find a list of these potential bills on our website at www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov.**

A special session will cost taxpayers upwards of \$20,000 per day, so in the weeks leading up to it I’ll be going through the 500-plus page budget to see if I can find more places to save taxpayers money. The majority party may try to raise more taxes during the special session and say it’s necessary to help people survive the economic recession we’re all in right now. Does that logic make sense to you? Raising your taxes to help you get by when money is tight?

I’m proud of my colleagues in the Senate for their strength and determination to see through the gimmicks aimed at raising taxes. Nearly all of us voted against tax increase proposals this year, and I hope that some of the majority party members can see how that benefits the people in their districts.

When only one party is in charge of government, bipartisan solutions to state problems are often overlooked, rejected or flat out ignored. Not too long ago, the Legislature was made up of nearly an equal number of Republicans and Democrats, and with that makeup members of the House and Senate were able to work more closely with each other to find suitable

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compromises. I hope to see a time when those principles supersede party affiliation and all of us can truly work for the betterment of the people of this great state of ours.

I must say **thank you** to all who have written, phone or e-mailed me during session. Each time I heard testimony in committee or each time I voted, I thought of your valuable input. **Again, than you all so much!**

In closing...

If you'd like to share your concerns with me or ask me a question, please feel free to send me an e-mail to becker.randi@leg.wa.gov. You can also visit my legislative website at www.SenateRepublicans.wa.gov/Becker. **Please consider forwarding this e-mail to anyone you think might be interested in receiving it. Ask them to contact me so I can add them to my distribution list.**

I look forward to your comments and suggestions. My office phone number is (360) 786-7602, or you can write me at 115B Irv Newhouse Building, Olympia, WA 98504. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you in the Washington State Senate. It is truly an honor.

Sincerely,



Randi Becker
2nd District State Senator



P.S. I'll be holding a telephone town hall meeting shortly after the special session. Stay tuned for details, and keep an eye out for my online government guide! It'll be available on my website soon!